

How Bihar created a turning point in national politics



V.Chandramohan. For
contact: chandramohan.v@hindutamil.co.in

How will it feel if the captain of a team defected to the rival team just ahead of the moment of toss in the finals of world cup cricket? The political somersault that Nitish Kumr has played in Bihar has given out the same feeling.

He has returned to the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance and become Chief Minister again (!). But, there is a slight difference this time. Nitish was never appointed as the 'captain' of the 'INDIA' alliance. That was the main reason for Nitish's exit from the alliance. Also there are some other factors like BJP's

strategies and the prevailing dissatisfaction with Congress-Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD).

Background

Nitish Kumar, who left the National Democratic Alliance in August 2022 and became the Chief Minister again on behalf of the Mahagadhbhandhan Alliance, started mobilizing opposition parties against the BJP in June 2023. Later, the total vote share of the coalition parties named 'INDIA' was said to be 38% while the BJP's vote percentage was 37. Nitish held the first meeting of the INDIA alliance in Patna, the capital of Bihar. In a way, the Bihar government and the political situation in the state were a model form of alliance.

Meanwhile, Nitish was reluctant to give up the CM post though he had already agreed to give the post to the Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav after the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Besides, he also wanted to be appointed as the coordinator of the INDIA. In the last video meeting of the alliance, Nitish is said to have been displeased by Rahul Gandhi who insisted on waiting for Mamata Banerjee's opinion when Sonia Gandhi had decided to appoint Nitish as the coordinator.

Nitish had thought that if he got the post of coordinator, his chances of becoming the prime ministerial candidate would be brighter. He did not appreciate Mallikarjuna Kharge being promoted by Mamata Banerjee and Arvind Kejriwal.

While Nitish had already posed a challenge to the BJP by conducting a caste-wise census, the BJP recently announced the Bharat Ratna for Karpooori Thakur for providing reservation for the backward classes in Bihar (in 1977). Nitish welcomed it and started showering praises on Modi, enraging the RJD. The INDIA alliance was upended and the scenario changed.

Challenges to Congress

Several problems have resulted from the intransigent attitude of the Congress. A coordinator has not been selected for the alliance. A serious consultation on sharing of constituencies is yet to take place. The main reason why the Congress has already lost to the BJP in the Assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh is that it has contested alone without giving space to the alliance parties, say observers.

They say that the Congress did not try to be serious and show expediency in the matter of seat sharing even after the bad defeat. As a result, before Rahul Gandhi's 'Nayaya Yatra' entered West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee made a bold announcement that the Trinamool Congress would go it alone in all 42 constituencies. Nitish had defected to his old alliance before Rahul yatra entered Bihar.

In Uttar Pradesh, where the Congress's influence has declined significantly, the Samajwadi Party says it will give the party 11 seats; But the Congress is adamant that it wants at least 15 seats. Punjab state Congress leaders have frowned upon alliance with Aam Aadmi Party. The Aam Aadmi Party says that it can allocate seats to the party in Punjab and Delhi only if

the Congress gives them substantial seats in Gujarat and Haryana. Thus there are problems galore for the INDIA alliance!

Benefit for BJP

The BJP is leaving the opposition parties rattled over the Citizenship Amendment Act, Uniform Civil Code and Enforcement Directorate's actions against leaders like Lalu Prasad Yadav and Hemant Soren. The party has appointed election in-charges for 23 states and Union Territories.

The Hindi speaking states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Haryana and Bihar have now gone into BJP's hands. The BJP, which has already succeeded in wooing Hindus across castes with the inauguration of the Ram temple, has created a major challenge for the opposition parties in OBC politics as Nitish, who conducted the caste-wise survey, is now on their side. Thus, BJP has two weapons: 'Kamandal' and 'Mandal'.

While United Janata Dal has five members in the Rajya Sabha, as a result of Nitish's change, now the National Democratic Alliance has 114 members in the Rajya Sabha. Not only that, there is a high possibility that some other parties will also be attracted towards BJP.

Nitish's future

Nitish has become a laughing stock in political circles because of his frequent defections. And, the BJP will not keep him peaceful either. In the 2020 elections, the BJP played a political game with

the help of Lok Janshakti Party chief Chirag Paswan, thereby significantly reducing the victory rate of Nitish's United Janata Dal.

Although Nitish was reinstated as Chief Minister, Tarkishore Prasad and Renu Devi, who were hated by him, were also posted as Deputy Chief Ministers. This time, the BJP has appointed both Samrat Chelatri and Vijay Kumar Sinha, who are critical of Nitish, as Deputy Chief Ministers.

Besides, Nitish's arrival in the NDA has left smaller parties like Lok Janshakti Party and Hindustan Awam Morcha in the National Democratic Alliance in disarray. There may be problems in seat allocations too.

Favourable features of INDIA alliance

Mamata Banerjee, who was dissatisfied over the Congress but did not leave the alliance, points out that she did not nominate Nitish Kumar as the coordinator because she knew in advance that Nitish Kumar might do such a thing as what he did. With Nitish's exit, the division of seats between Congress-RJD-Left in Bihar will become easier.

Unlike Nitish, Mallikarjuna Kharge's role is now believed to be paramount as he is reliable. To spite Nitish, RJD has started celebrating the major achievements of the Mahagadhbhandhan regime like caste wise census, 4 lakh job appointments, health sector development. The party plans to garner support by saying this in the election campaign. On the whole, Bihar has given a turning point in national politics

Translated by V. Mariappan.